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Frogs and Newts Revisited

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Purpose of today's session

- To explore a case study of peer assessment as one part of formative assessment on BA Year 1 social work module
- Aim is to highlight process used, the outcome and the student feedback on what worked well and what the issues were.
- Carol's slot – revisiting earlier learning experiences – things lecturers don't see
- Claudia's slot – impact on future learning including placement learning

What we did...

- Part of summative assessment 2 -3,000 word essay
- 45 students in total: split into Home Groups with 5 students in each
- Each Home Group were asked to formatively assess each other's essay and to give written feedback on marking sheet
- Tutors to give feedback on the group feedback
- Held workshop to outline feedback process

Suggested key areas for feedback

- Focus on feeding back what you think the person did well and what they could do better in order to improve their work.
- Think about how well they answered the question – was the focus clear enough?
- Did they back up what they said with appropriate references?
- Did the work have a clear structure?

Thoughts on feedback

- Think carefully about how you phrase what you say – do unto others here as you would be done unto yourself.
- If you see any things that could be better do say this in a way the other person will be able to hear it and act upon it - a good social work skill here.
- Do remember to say what was good and worked well too.
- No need to give a grade.

The big idea

- The aim here is that you give each other feedback to enable you to submit an improved essay for your final work which will be marked.
- Feedback from your peers can be one of the best feedback channels.
- Reading other's work can be helpful
- Getting used to the marking criteria can help your own focus

How process was managed...

- Return session in January – asked students to submit feedback electronically after session to Home Group and to discuss on line
- Brief feedback in Home Groups on process rather than detailed content
- Tutors were given hard copies of each essay to read for seminar students plus hard copies of feedback sheets given by students to each other
- Students asked to comment on how they used formative feedback in their summative assessment – two fails and both disregarded comments

Issues from Focus Group

- Level of anxiety about commenting on other students' work – higher than others seeing their work

"..I thought 'oh my God' I really don't want to do this"

" I was very worried about what would happen if someone gave me an essay to read and it's, in my opinion, clearly rubbish"

"You think all the worst things at the start...all the horrible things that could happen."

- Level of anxiety about other students seeing their work

" I can just about take criticism from teachers ...but to get it from peers as well. It was almost like that will stay with you for the rest of the time that I am with them. How are they going to judge me?"

" It was a terrifying experience for me to actually give my work for someone to look at – not just one person but four..."

- Many groups were reluctant to feedback on line and gave a hardcopy to each other: on –line discussion didn't happen then in several groups
 - Feedback was variable across students – ranging from detailed constructive feedback to very brief comment.
 - Some students felt let down by lack of feedback, "I know I gave a lot of feedback but I didn't receive it"
- Others had a positive experience,
"The feedback was incredible...then I could change and make things better"

- Whilst everyone saw the rationale for using the marking sheet several commented on the need to spend more time in advance 'decoding' the language

"It's in tutor speak and not student speak"

"Simplify it to make it a bit more friendly for people"

Overall experience...

- Very positive experience reported overall

"It was probably – I hate to say this – but probably the most enjoyable and helpful thing this year."

"I think it was one of the most fantastic things ever ..but my initial feeling was 'no way'"

Learning pluses in a nutshell

- Feedback from others on own work

"I received very specific feedback and it really helped me. Some people gave really constructive (comments) like 'this is how your introduction should be.'"

"When I write I get too close to my essays so I am not reading them anymore..I can't see the mistakes – so someone else reading them for me is invaluable."

- Finding new ways of writing from seeing work of other students

"You don't take whole chunks. You take ideas, and the way that people have written them in a clearer format than yours and then you think yes, if I had done it like that it would have been better and then you can change it, and it helps everyone."

- Giving insight into what the standard on the programme is

"It showed you how high you need to go and how low you were"

"I could see where I come from and I could see where I want to go"

- Giving students a clearer understanding of the marking criteria

"Having to use it makes you think my God the tutors have to do all this, so you need to be able to make it easy. And the easier it is the more likely you are to have a higher mark. It is almost stepping out and having a little insight into a different world. A sneaky preview into how you are going to get better marks."

- Helping with future academic work in other modules

"I have already started doing it – using the feedback in my other essays and transferring it."

This is a theme Carol and Claudia will explore further.

Student assessment
before Christmas
said:

"PAT ROCKS"



PAT
DIDN'T
"ROCK"
ANYMORE!!

History

- Age 12 very proud to get a "Merit Mark" for:- Biology essay:- Frogs and Newts
- 'It's rubbish and full of mistakes'
- 'If I had marked it this is what I would have done!'



- For the rest of my formal education (4 years) avoided anyone looking at my work

To the present day

- 16 years later returned to formal education was scary enough, then Pat said: other students are going to read and mark your work:-



I Did It!

- I had made the decision to go back to education so:
 - In for a penny.....

It changed the way I view not only my own work but gave me confidence to embrace feedback and improved my academic work!



What I thought

- A lot of work but worthwhile
- Informative and knowledge building
 - Gaining Knowledge
 - Ideas
 - Different writing styles
 - What works well and what doesn't
 - Appreciation of the importance of being easy to read
 - Understanding of marking criteria

How it helped

- Helped improve final essay
- Built relationship and understand between students
- Highlighted the difficulties of communicating positive and negative information (very important in social work)
- Helped with understanding the marking criteria
- Build confidence

What now?

- Along with other students we still use it
- My husband now reads my essays!
- We have a greater understanding
- We can positively help each other in an academic way

and:-

Pat still "ROCKS!"

Academic Altruism

- “I was very worried about what would happen if someone gave me an essay to read and it's, in my opinion, clearly rubbish.”
- This situation occurred in our home group when one essay was factually spot on but the layout, the way it was presented was way off the standard for this level.
- So what would you do?.....

Gains of Receiving Feedback

- Looking at other peoples style of work.
- Reading about subjects that you have not covered.
- The use of others essays like an extra textbook written in 'student speak.'
- Getting good ideas that help you to upgrade your work.

A Gift



Long Term Benefits

- No longer worried about handing over work to others. Important when in practice having to give reports to others.
- Less anxiety over looking at other peoples work.
- The ability to give and receive feedback be it positive or negative.
- The benefit of seeing work from a tutors perspective and understanding how the process of marking works.

So Overall it's all Good



For discussion

- Any questions or issues you would like to discuss further with us?
- Have you done anything similar?
- What did you find?
- Are there any broader implications for social work education in general?